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Was Different It Wasn't a Bore

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By Eugenia Sheppard
Women's Feature Editor

Everybody knows about committees and committee meetings. Otherwise the story that a camel is an animal designed by a committee wouldn't get a laugh every time. When you think of it, a book called "The Committee" could sell like "The Group." And what a movie.

One committee, though, working for the Opera Ball in Washington next month, found itself in clover the other day when it met at French born decorator Vincent Fourcade's apartment in the East 70s. Fourcade and his partner, Bob Denning, are decorating part of the Smithsonian Institute for the ball, a first in that august institution's history.

When the committee turned up at the Fourcade apartment, it expected nothing more than

perhaps an unusually lush East Side apartment. What it found was a unique setting for all its business.

In the beginning Vincent Fourcade lived in the apartment just above. When the place below became vacant, he was tempted to double his living space. Little problems like cutting through the floor and inserting a flying staircase don't disturb a decorator.

"I had an antique Adam mirror I liked," says Vincent Fourcade. "I finally decided I'd try it over the mantel piece. If it fitted it would be an omen. I'd take the apartment."

The mirror fitted to the eight of an inch. The right way to enter the apartment nowadays is by the upper level, then down a free-corkscrew stairway set in a mirrored well.

At the foot of the stairs stands an oval dining table with a mirrored top. Looking down at it is like peering into a crystal ball. Reflections everywhere. The mirrored ceiling seems to be at least six flights of stairs above.

The drawing room is three steps down. It's part of the original drawing room of a house that once belonged to Roger Winthrop.

In the room, Vincent Fourcade has used many of the treasures that clients can't coax out of him. Besides the Adam mirror there is the rare Ming rug that almost covers the marble floors, signed furniture and old bronzes.

The main thing is the way the room flatters the women in it. They preen and pose like cats on those signed chairs and among the priceless bibelots.

It's the colors that do it. The walls are pale peachy pink and the silk draperies just a slightly deeper shade. The gilded chairs are covered in palest blue brocade.

The room has plenty of humor, too. It's actually a miniature of a famous English room, complete with marbleized pillars to look like real marble, and with miniature sculptures on top of each. To say nothing of a huge, feathery potted palm in the middle of the room.

Bob Denning and Vincent Fourcade are famous for using prints and patterns on patterns, but the only thing that's figured in the new room is the rug.

"It's pretty and a little pompous," says Bob Denning. "We think that's the new look for rooms. Especially to show off the new evening clothes."

They're planning something completely different for the Opera Ball, May 6, in the Smithsonian. The party will be held in the building's modern wing, that has old marble walls but stainless steel escalators. It's not too unlike the inside of the Kremlin.

"We're going to do something very modernistic, quite pop art," says Vincent Fourcade.

There will be little or no color in the room. Tables will be covered with crystal clear plastic and lighted from underneath. Even buffet tables and champagne buckets on the tables will glow from within. Light on all the dancers will come from a grove of 50



Mrs. Frank Wisner, executive committee chairman, flew up from Washington for the meeting. Vincent Fourcade, in center, with Josephine Hughes, chairman of the New York group working for the Opera Ball

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tall birch trees planted there for the night.

Like most charity do's, the Opera Ball costs \$100 a ticket. Most of the committee members, though, admit they have already had most of their money's worth at something that is often just a bore—a committee meeting.

David Kidd—he's the only Scotch designer on Seventh Avenue—turned a page and started a new career on Seventh Avenue yesterday. He's designing the complete collection for Barberini, a division of Originala. The new clothes will go on with the young mood of the Jabe collection he did for Jablow. Coats, suits and most of all costumes, will be moderately priced.

Norbert is flying down to Palm Beach soon to do the Duchess of Windsor's hair and take care of some of his other ladies.

Mme. Gres, the Paris designer, will be a grandmother in July, just about the time of the collections. Her workrooms have already started the christening robe.

APR 8 1966